

**Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
*helping people help the land*

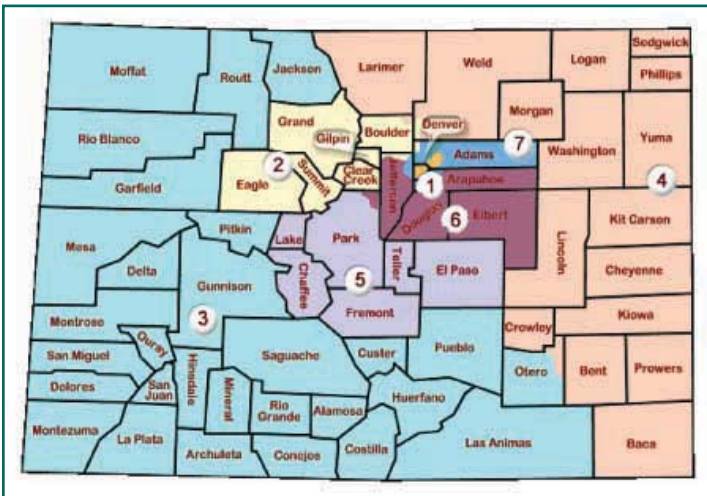
## Winter 2006

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**NRCS** partners with private land managers (farmers and ranchers), conservation districts, state and local conservation agencies, tribal governments, rural communities, businesses, and other entities to get conservation on the land to help conserve the landscape, increase agricultural productivity, improve the environment, and strengthen the quality of life.

The priority natural resource issues identified by Colorado NRCS include:



- **Drought** - Colorado's 2006 drought conditions are poised to mimic 2002's conditions, which proved to be the most devastating in the State's history.
- **Land Fragmentation** – Over the past three years, NRCS has provided financial and technical assistance in the protection of over 23,711 acres of prime agricultural lands.
- **Threatened and Endangered Species** – Colorado has been active in using programs, as well as partnership activity, to assist in protecting more than 42,000 acres of wildlife habitat and in promoting and implementing voluntary actions by private landowners to protect and enhance our threatened and endangered species.
- **Invasive Species** – NRCS has committed \$1 million of Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funds and has partnered with local weed districts to help combat Colorado's weed concerns.
- **Animal Feeding Operations** – Over the past two years NRCS has provided over \$3.9 million in financial assistance and approved some 140 animal waste applications and Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans.
- **Water Compact Issues** – NRCS Colorado is working with the Colorado State Engineer's Office and local landowners to effectively utilize our programs to assist the state in meeting compact requirements.

**The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is one of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's lead conservation agencies, addressing the health and well-being of America's resources: soil, water, air, plants, and animals. NRCS, in cooperation with Conservation Districts, provides leadership in a partnership effort to help conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment.**

Colorado has some 66.3M acres, of which 49% are farms and ranches. Colorado agricultural lands are desirable landscapes, yet complex ecosystems. NRCS provides within its programs and activities the variety of flexibility needed to assist Colorado's farmers and ranchers conserve their natural resources.

NRCS Colorado uses a “watershed approach” to help people address natural resource concerns in the state. We currently work with our partners to conduct watershed assessments that will help provide estimates of where conservation investments will best address the concerns of landowners, conservation districts, and other community organizations and stakeholders. The Lower Arkansas watershed is an NRCS priority to begin a rapid assessment process due to the need to gather data to effectively address serious resource needs and because of the state’s need to address river compact requirements.

# CTA CONSERVATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

CTA is one of the most FUNDAMENTAL CONSERVATION PROGRAMS NRCS uses to accomplish its goals. CTA provides voluntary conservation technical assistance to landusers, communities, units of state and local government, and other Federal agencies in planning and implementing conservation systems.

## CTA IN 2005

NRCS employees in Colorado work with ten grassroots watershed associations and 77 local Conservation Districts to serve as the primary building block in our efforts to get the best conservation on the ground. Colorado has leveraged this program to make great strides to:

- Deliver science-based technology to our customers.
- Provide a local presence in the communities with our conservation partners.
- Ensure one-on-one assistance in the voluntary conservation of our natural resources.

## CTA PROGRAMS

**Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI)** is a nationwide collaborative process of individuals and organizations working to maintain and improve management, productivity, and health of the Nation's privately owned grazing land. In 2005, Colorado NRCS devoted 15 staff years to producers on grazing land. For the past three years, GLCI has focused its efforts to assist ranchers to properly manage livestock and resources to minimize drought impacts.

**Plant Materials** -- The Upper Colorado Environmental Plant Center (UCEPC) serves Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, finding conservation solutions for the diverse intermountain region. At 6,500 feet in elevation, the Center is unique in that it is the highest elevation center in the plant material system.

**Snow Survey and Water Supply Forecasting** works with Colorado's water users and managers to provide information on water availability across the State. In this region, there are 154 automated SNOTEL (SNOW-pack TELemetry) sites, including 99 in Colorado, and an additional 138 manually measured snow courses.

**Soil Survey** data is available online, or in draft form, for 96% of the State's privately-owned land, 100% of Native American land, 10% of U.S. Forest land, and 95% of Bureau of Land Management and National Park Service lands. Digital data is scheduled to be completed on all privately-owned lands by the end of 2007.

## OTHER NRCS INITIATIVES

**Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D)** encourages and improves the capability of volunteers, locally elected and civic leaders in RC&D areas to plan and carry out projects that improve the quality of life. There are eight RC&D areas in Colorado, covering about 80 percent of the state. NRCS is exploring opportunities to develop an RC&D to cover the Front Range.

**Small Watershed Programs** (PL-566) work through local government sponsors to help solve natural resource problems on a watershed basis. Colorado has 154 watershed dams, and growth in the State has made these flood prevention projects critical to protect life and property.

The **Emergency Watershed Protection Program** (EWP) is designed to help protect lives and property threatened by natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires. In 2005, NRCS approved EWP funds for financial and technical assistance for three flood protection projects totaling more than \$200,000. Approximately \$53,000 has been requested to fund a fire project.

**Watershed Planning and Operations** -- Colorado has four watershed planning projects for flood control and land treatment practices to address water quality and quantity. The state is also completing resource assessments in the ten Colorado watershed association boundaries.



# NRCS **NEW** GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Nationally, in 2005 NRCS made some \$38 million available for competitively selected proposals from state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations, federally recognized Indian tribes, and individuals for projects in four conservation emphasis areas:

- ◆ **\$20 million for Conservation Innovation Grants** for development and adoption of innovative conservation technologies and approaches, in conjunction with agricultural production. CIG is authorized under NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program. The Colorado state component received more than \$700,000 for CIG grants in 2005.
- ◆ **\$9.5 million for Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program partnership proposals** that address wetland creation and enhancement efforts.
- ◆ **\$4 million for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) proposals** to control and manage invasive species affecting grazing lands.
- ◆ **\$4 million for Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) proposals** to help partners identify and solve regional, state, and local natural resources concerns.

## USDA FARM BILL PROGRAMS

NRCS also utilizes Conservation Programs authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill to accomplish many of its priorities. Through Farm Bill programs, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to promote the conservation and improvement of soil, water, air, energy, plant and animal life, and other natural resources priorities. Colorado's conservation program activities in 2005 are as follows:

**T**he Conservation Security Program (CSP) rewards the bests and motivates the rest. It is a voluntary conservation program that supports ongoing stewardship of private agricultural lands by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources.

2006 marks the third CSP sign-up (the second for Colorado). In 2006, Colorado will receive funding for one CSP watershed, the Middle South Platte–Sterling, which covers some 1.9 million acres in the northeastern portion of Colorado.

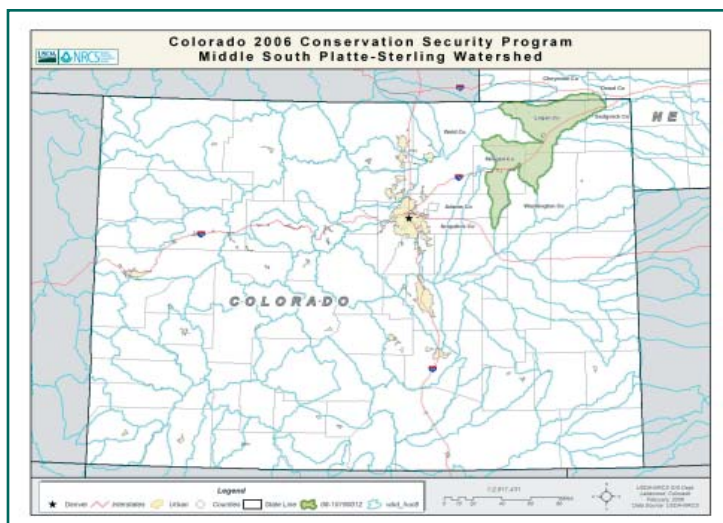
The area encompasses portions of seven Colorado counties, including Weld, Arapahoe, Sedgwick, Adams, Logan, Morgan, and Washington. There are an estimated 1,550 farms in the watershed and agricultural land uses consist of irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, non-irrigated pasture, and rangeland.

While it was anticipated that Colorado would have two watershed areas eligible for the 2006 sign up which included the Upper Arkansas-John Martin Reservoir watershed, located in Eastern Colorado, funding limitations only allowed for one watershed at this time.

IN 2005, CSP was available in 10 Colorado watersheds, which included Beaver, Pawnee, Arikaree, Rush, Piceance-Yellow, San Luis, Saguache, Tomichi, Upper White, and McElmo.

### 2005 SIGN-UP SUMMARY

- ◆ 140 Contracts (75% of eligible applications; 67% of all applications)
- ◆ 283,129 acres enrolled
- ◆ \$2.1M (2005 payments)



## Statewide Farm Bill NRCS Program Assistance

*Conservation programs help to provide the support needed to reduce the gap between the level of environmental quality the general public demands and the level of environmental quality farmers and ranchers can provide.*

### 2005 Environmental Quality Incentives Program/EQIP - District 7

A voluntary program that provides technical, educational, and financial assistance to eligible farmers and ranchers to address soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on their land in an environmentally beneficial and cost-effective manner.

Number of Applications	Approved Applications	Approved Funding	Acres Treated
19	11	\$198,016	7,213

### 2005 Statewide Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program/WHIP

A voluntary program that encourages creation of high quality wildlife habitat that support wildlife populations of national, state, Tribal, and local significance.

Number of Applications	Approved Applications	Approved Funding	Acres Approved
79	33	\$661,482	11,215

### 2005 Statewide Wetlands Reserve Program/WRP

A voluntary land retirement program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible landowners to address wetland, wildlife habitat, soil, water, and related natural resource concerns on private lands.

Number of Applications	Perpetual Easements Approved	30-Year Easements Approved	Cost-Share Approved	Approved Funding	Acres Treated
22	10	0	0	\$3,090,800	2,315

### 2005 Statewide Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program/FRPP

A voluntary program that helps landowners keep their productive land in agriculture through conservation easements limiting conversion of property from non-agricultural uses.

Properties	Type Approved			Approved Funding	Acres Approved
	Farm	Ranch	Orchard		
13	1	12	0	\$4,405,632	7,024

### 2005 Grassland Reserve Program/GRP - District 7

A voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to help restore and protect grassland, rangelands, pastureland, shrubland, and certain other lands.

Number of Applications	Approved Applications	Approved Funding	Acreage Treated
2	0	0	0

### 2005 Statewide Ground & Surface Water Conservation Program/GSWC

A voluntary program that helps conserve water and meet compact requirements.

Number of Applications	Approved Applications	Approved Funding
287	99	\$3,327,925

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